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**Report Highlights:**

**Japanese production of fresh asparagus is projected to reach 31,500 metric tons in 2002, up approximately 10 percent from the previous year. Although Japan's harvest-area for asparagus has been unchanged since last year at around 7,700 hectares, warm temperatures in early spring and newly planted high-yield trees led to a good crop in 2002. Japanese imports of fresh asparagus from the United States and Mexico declined 18 and 44 percent in 2002, respectively.**

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Includes PSD changes: Yes  
Includes Trade Matrix: Yes  
Annual Report  
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## **Japan's Good Weather Brought Record Asparagus Production in 2002**

Japanese production of fresh asparagus is projected to reach 31,500 metric tons in 2002, up approximately 10 percent from the previous year, according to industry sources. Warm temperatures in early spring led to a good asparagus crop this year. This year's harvest started a few weeks earlier than last year due to the good weather. Although the Japanese production of asparagus usually reaches at the peak in May, there were already sufficient supplies of domestic asparagus in the Japanese market in April this season. Nagano prefecture, a major asparagus production region, increased the shipments of asparagus to Tokyo's Ohta Wholesale Market by 50 percent in mid-April. Nagano asparagus was traded at 240 yen (\$1.93), a similar price to last year, for a bundle of 150 grams in Tokyo's wholesale market in April.

## **An Increase in Domestic Production Reduced Imports of Fresh Asparagus**

Japanese consumption of fresh asparagus has been fairly stable at around 50,000 metric tons annually. Domestic and imported asparagus shared the Japanese market equally in the past, but domestic asparagus has recently surpassed imports in the market, reflecting an increased output of domestic asparagus. Although Japan's area harvested for asparagus has been unchanged at around 7,700 hectares, Japanese asparagus output has been growing slowly in the recent years, with newly planted trees reaching commercial production. Many Japanese farmers shifted from the Washington variety to a new variety, called Welcome, for better production yields.

Japanese imports of fresh asparagus is projected to 20,000 metric tons in 2002, down approximately 10 percent from the previous year, according to Tokyo's traders. Growing domestic production directly affects imports from Mexico, U.S., Thailand, and the Philippines, when the sales of domestic asparagus are at the peak in April through June.

## **Japanese Imports of U.S. Asparagus Declined 18 Percent in 2002**

Japan imported 2,090 metric tons of fresh asparagus from the United States during January - April 2002, down approximately 18 percent from the previous year. The Japanese bumper crop discouraged Japanese traders from increasing imports. Sales of domestic asparagus started in April this year, a few weeks earlier than last year, and competed head on with the sales of U.S. asparagus. Nagano asparagus went into a full production in early May and took a large share of U.S. asparagus market, which usually dominates the Japanese market in April and May. U.S. asparagus was traded at 6,000 - 7,000 yen (\$48.36 - \$56.42) for a case of 13.6 kilograms at Tokyo's wholesale market in April.

## **Imports from Mexico Declined 44 Percent in 2002**

Japanese imports of Mexican asparagus also declined to 2,238 metric tons during January - April 2002, down approximately 44 percent from the previous year. Mexican asparagus is largely sold in Japan from January through March. The weakened Japanese yen was blamed for the decline of imports from Mexico, according to Tokyo's traders. The exchange rate for the Japanese yen in January 2002 was 132.94 yen to one U.S. dollar, while it was 116.38 yen in January 2001.

## **Japanese Asparagus Prices Remain Stable**

Currently, Nagano asparagus is traded at 105 - 126 yen (\$0.84 - \$1.01) for a bundle of 100 grams at Tokyo's Ohta Produce Market. Niigata asparagus is traded at 147 - 168 yen (\$1.18 - \$1.35) for a bundle of 150 grams. Domestic asparagus is commonly sold with prefectural names such as Nagano and Niigata. In keeping with fresh produce marketing strategies, many supermarkets retail asparagus at 150 yen (\$1.20) for a bundle of 100 grams and 200 yen (\$1.61) for a bundle of 150 grams.

## PS&D Tables and Trade Matrices

### Fresh Asparagus PS&D Table

PSD Table						
Country	Japan					
Commodity	Fresh Asparagus				(HA)(MT)	
	Revised	2000	Preliminary	2001	Forecast	2002
	Old	New	Old	New	Old	New
Market Year Begin		01/2000		01/2001		01/2002
Area Planted	0	7351	0	7630	0	7700
Area Harvested	0	7351	0	7630	0	7700
TOTAL Production	26701	26701	28700	28700	0	31500
Imports, Fresh	24766	24766	23000	22054	0	20000
TOTAL SUPPLY	51467	51467	51700	50754	0	51500
Exports, Fresh	0	0	0	0	0	0
Domestic Fresh Market	50197	50197	50420	49474	0	50000
For Processing	1270	1270	1280	1280	0	1500
TOTAL UTILIZATION	51467	51467	51700	50754	0	51500

**Fresh Asparagus Import Trade Matrix**

Import Trade Matrix			
Country	Japan		
Commodity	Fresh Asparagus		
Time period	Jan. - Dec.	Units:	Metric Tons
Imports for:	2000		2001
U.S.	5454	U.S.	3622
Others		Others	
Australia	6086	Australia	6022
Philippines	4293	Philippines	4362
Mexico	4913	Mexico	4056
Thailand	1895	Thailand	2148
New Zealand	1384	New Zealand	1273
China	437	China	372
Peru	214	Peru	90
France	68	France	69
Netherlands	15	Netherlands	31
Total for Others	19305		18423
Others not Listed	7		9
Grand Total	24766		22054

**Fresh Asparagus Wholesale Price Table**

Prices Table			
Country	Japan		
Commodity	Fresh Asparagus		
Prices in	Yen	per uom	KG
Year	2001	2002	% Change
Jan	912	1086	19.08%
Feb	873	998	14.32%
Mar	858	972	13.29%
Apr	970	1010	4.12%
May	832		-100.00%
Jun	951		-100.00%
Jul	840		-100.00%
Aug	750		-100.00%
Sep	674		-100.00%
Oct	598		-100.00%
Nov	632		-100.00%
Dec	817		-100.00%
Exchange Rate	124.05	Local currency/US \$	